

VZCZCXRO0328  
PP RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR  
DE RUEHDO #0446/01 1901325  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 091325Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY DOHA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9230  
INFO RHMFISS/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHJM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0013  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0757  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 1309  
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 0064  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1195  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0070  
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 0050  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0088  
RUEHPF/AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH 0007

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000446

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2019  
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EINV](#) [TRGY](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: QATAR LAUNCHES TASK FORCE ON FOOD SECURITY

REF: A. SECSTATE 58996  
[1](#)B. RIYADH 713

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

-----  
(C) KEY POINTS  
-----

-- Qatar formed a Task Force on Food Security earlier this year with the goal of developing a comprehensive food security policy by spring 2010.

-- The Task Force aims to improve self-sufficiency via sustainable development of the country's agricultural production, as well as secure external sources of supply.

-- Food imports account for 90% of total food supplies in Qatar with only seven countries supplying 75% of the import supply. The GOQ sees this as an unacceptable level of risk.

-- Qatar is reaching out internationally for support. The Task Force is seeking U.S. assistance and expertise as it develops its program.

-----  
(C) COMMENTS  
-----

-- While Gulf states' efforts to buy up agricultural land or companies overseas have gotten most of the press on this issue of late, Qatar's efforts are also notable for the GOQ's intention to develop a significant domestic agricultural industry.

-- Engaging the GOQ on Food Security could be a promising avenue to share USG expertise while assisting Qatar on an issue of high priority to the leadership. Post is currently working to assist with visits to the U.S. by the Task Force Chairman this month, and by a larger delegation this fall.

End Key Points and Comments.

[1](#)1. (C) In engaging the GOQ in response to Ref A on agricultural development and food security, Embassy learned of a new Task Force on Food Security, established following a 2008 Amiri decree which created the Qatar National Food Security Program. The Task Force includes 14 ministries and organizations within Qatar and reports to the Heir Apparent,

Shaykh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani. The Task Force is headed by a legal advisor in the Heir Apparent's office, Fahad Bin Mohammad Al-Attiyah. (Note: A full background briefing on the Task Force was emailed to NEA/ARP Qatar Desk Officer Matthew Blong.)

12. (C) As explained by Al-Attiyah to Emboffs, Qatar recognizes food security is a global problem, but as a small state with little domestic agriculture, Qatar feels particularly exposed.

13. (C) The first part of the Task Force's mandate is to improve self-sufficiency. While Qatar's larger neighbor Saudi Arabia may be souring on domestic agricultural schemes (Ref B), Qatar apparently sees boosting domestic production as both necessary and desirable. However, Al-Attiyah also noted several complications to enhanced domestic production:

-- Depletion of aquifers, dependence on desalination, and a water reserve of only 1.8 days

-- A 30% reduction in farms over the last few years due to restrictive water supplies

-- Due to these problems, only 1/3 of total arable land in Qatar is currently used for cultivation

-- A lack of history with large scale agriculture production

#### Powering the Industry

DOHA 00000446 002 OF 002

14. (C) Building a domestic agriculture industry would obviously be energy intensive, and Al-Attiyah explained the Task Force is evaluating sources for all needed inputs to the production chain. Given the paucity of other water resources, Qatar would need to depend heavily on desalination. Al-Attiyah seems focused on renewable energy sources, particularly solar, to power such plants.

#### Securing External Sources of Supply

15. (C) The Task Force's second objective is to secure external sources of supply via diversification of trade partners and investments throughout the supply chain. In this regard, Qatar hopes to use its hydrocarbon exports to secure reciprocal food security agreements with energy consumers, invest in agricultural land abroad, and improve its long-term storage facilities.

16. (C) The key Qatari organization undertaking investment abroad is Hassad Food company, which is a subsidiary of the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA). Hassad invests in and operates agri-business with a current focus on prospects in sheep, cattle, and poultry, while also interested in staple foods (rice, wheat, sugar, barley, and maize).

-- (U) Qatar is investing in agricultural land or businesses in several countries, including Kenya, Camobdia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Jordan, Malaysia, and Nigeria, according to press reports. These deals are often planned as quid pro quos; in Kenya, for example, press reports indicate that Qatar wants to lease 40,000 hectares of land in exchange for building a new port in Kenya.

#### Task Force Outreach Efforts and Desire for U.S. Assistance

17. (SBU) As part of its international outreach efforts, Qatar will be hosting the UN Regional Conference on Achieving Food Security in the Arab World in November 2009. The conference is also sponsored by the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

¶8. (C) The Task Force also contacted Texas A&M Qatar to explore expanding their local education program (now focused on engineering) to include an agricultural based curriculum.

¶9. (C) Al-Attiyah expressed to Emboffs the GOQ's interest in assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Currently, the focus is on gaining institutional knowledge on policies and laws concerning food production and importation. They are interested in learning about the best practices in agriculture from around the world and how to adapt them to their local environment and consumer base.

¶10. (C) Post sees such collaboration as a promising opportunity to strengthen governmental ties with the GOQ and expand U.S. commercial opportunities. This relationship could also strengthen ties to the broader region by fostering food security and renewable energy.

LeBaron